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The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and admirers of Henry David Thoreau. Frederick Wagner, president; Marian Wheeler, vice-president; Mary Anderson, treasurer; and Walter Harding, secretary. Address communications to the secretary at State University College, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454. Dues, \$10 a year; Friend, \$15; Family, \$25; and Life membership, \$100. Dues should be sent to the Thoreau Society, 156 Belknap St., Concord, Mass. 01742. The society also sponsors the Thoreau Lyceum at that address.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND THE HARD BOILED DICK

by Lonnie Willis

"I believe most of the nonsense that Thoreau was preaching." Robert B. Parker, Promised Land

American detective fiction is constructed according to formula and one necessary element of that formula is the code of conduct by which the detective-protagonist measures his behavior in a corrupt and dangerous world.<sup>1</sup> Usually the "code" develops along the lines established first in Raymond Chandler's novels about Philip Marlowe and later in his definitive description of the "hardboiled" private eye. In "The Simple Art of Murder" Chandler explains that the detective "must be...a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be...a man of honor--by instinct...He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world...; if he is a man of honor in one thing he is that in all things...He talks as the man of his age talks--that is, with a rough wit...and a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness."<sup>2</sup> It can easily occur to readers of Walden that this description sounds not unlike a characterization of Henry David Thoreau; in fact, the quotation cited above draws directly on a connection between the character of Thoreau and that of the private eye, or--at least--of one private eye. The quotation is a confession that the code of one of the toughest of the private "dicks" in current hard-boiled detective fiction is in part attributable to Henry Thoreau.

This detective, simply called Spenser, first took his place in the lineup of pulp-born private eyes, alongside Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe and Lew Archer, in a novel titled The Godwulf Manuscript (1974) and written by Robert B. Parker. A decade later, Parker's work consists almost entirely of eleven novels about "a wise-cracking, Boston-based private dick by the name of Spenser."<sup>3</sup> Robert Parker himself is "Boston-based." Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, he has earned both an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Boston University, and he taught in the English Department of Northeastern University from 1968 to 1978. Parker's interest in detective fiction began with an early reading of Chandler's The Big Sleep; it led to his doctoral dissertation "The Violent Hero, Wilderness Heritage and Urban Reality: A Study of the Private Eye in the Novels of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald."<sup>4</sup>

Though no writer has yet commented in a critical way on Parker's (or Spenser's) debt to Thoreau, David Geherin has noted that Parker's dissertation places him in the position of having a scholar's interest in Thoreau: "Parker traces the changing role of wilderness as fact and meta-

phor in the works of such writers as Thoreau, Melville, Twain, Faulkner, and Hemingway. His thesis is that as progress continued in America, wilderness disappeared so that the American heroes who were once able to test their virtues in the wilderness, were eventually forced to do so in civilization."<sup>5</sup> Spenser's wilderness virtues, similar to Thoreau's, must because of his own time prepare him not for a Walden Pond but for a civilization red in tooth and claw.

The presence of Thoreau is nearly ubiquitous in the protagonist's consciousness in the Spenser novels. Allusions to Thoreau's work, especially Walden, are common: "He was listening to the sound of a different drummer all right, and it was playing 'God Save the King'" (p. 190 The Godwulf Manuscript); "Someone had cut it with a bolt cutter. God knows why. But vandalism marches to the beat of its own drummer" (p. 154., Valediction). On some occasions the allusion to Thoreau enhances the crispness of a wisecrack, as in this confrontation between Spenser and a hostile bodybuilder in God Save the Child:

His abdominal muscles looked like cobblestones. The white shorts were slit up the side to accommodate his thigh muscles. They too showed stretch marks. My stomach contracted at the amount of effort he'd expended, the number of weights he'd lifted to get himself in this state.

He said, "What do you turds want?"

Down home hospitality."

I said, "We're looking for Walden Pond, you glib devil you."

"Well, there ain't no Walden Pond around here, so screw."

"I just love the way your eyes snap when you're angry," I said.<sup>6</sup>

Even though such brief references to Thoreau or to Walden Pond occur in other occasional citations, it is in two of the novels that a Thoreauvian ethic clearly makes a contribution to the code of the hero.

It is Parker's hero Spenser, of course, who speaks the words, "I believe most of the nonsense that Thoreau was preaching," in the novel Promised Land. In that book Spenser has been retained by a Cape Cod real-estate speculator, Harv Shepard, who wishes to recover his missing wife, Pam. As a part of the scheme to lure Pam back to her husband through non-violent persuasion, Spenser sets up a meeting with her in a tourists' restaurant at Plymouth Plantation, original landing zone in "the Promised Land."

While drinking with the wife, Spenser plumbs the depths of her hatred for her husband's materialism. When she charges the husband with not loving her because he is too involved with being a "mover and a shaker," she demands to know why

Spenser is not also a competitor in the rat race. "Why aren't you grunting and sweating to make the team, be a star, whatever the hell it is that Harvey and his friends are trying to do?" But Spenser tries to sidestep the question; to answer it will require him "to start talking about integrity and self-respect and stuff." His dialogue with Pam seems to indicate that his whole life has been an attempt to reach a goal not different from that found in Thoreau's discussion of his reason for going to Walden, to live life on his own terms. Here is Spenser's account:

"I try to be honorable. I know that's embarrassing to hear. It's embarrassing to say. But I believe most of the nonsense that Thoreau was preaching. And I have spent a long time working on getting myself to where I could do it. Where I could live life largely on my own terms."  
 "Thoreau?" Pam Shepard said. "You really did read all those books, didn't you?"<sup>7</sup>

To this confession of Thoreau's influence Spenser's usual woman friend, a psychologist named Susan Silverman, offers a rebuttal. She says, "And yet you constantly get yourself involved in other lives and in other people's troubles. This is not Walden Pond you've withdrawn to." To avoid embarrassment, the tough-guy Spenser responds with a wisecrack: "Everybody's got to do something."

There is some tendency for Silverman to perform as a foil for Spenser's Thoreauvean posing, forcing him back to what may be the reality of his life. On one occasion in the novel *Ceremony* (1982) she punctures Spenser's argument for the occupational advantages of prostitution by saying, "Didn't I see you building a cabin out by a pond in Concord the other day?" Spenser's reply acknowledges his own awareness of a pose: "'Uncle Henry,' I said. 'Not me. He was always a little dippy. Henry was.'"<sup>8</sup>

This is not to say that Spenser is not serious about Thoreau; it probably shows that the code prohibits one from being too serious about anything, at least on the surface. His profession about Thoreau's "nonsense" in *Promised Land* is an earnest one. Later in that novel Spenser arranges a fake arms sale in order to free Pam Shephard. In a police bust of her feminist partners, he sacrifices them to save her. When he then tries to persuade her to return to her husband because of her emotional investment in him, she wants to know about the source of his anger. His answer is a clue to the motivation for his usual deep involvement in the lives of his clients. Spenser says, "I don't know exactly. Thoreau said something once about judging the cost of things in terms of how much life he had to expend to get it. You and Harv aren't getting your money's worth. Thrift, I guess, it violates my sense of thrift."<sup>9</sup>

Something like Spenser's sense of personal thrift in life directs him to a solution to a young man's problems in the novel *Early Autumn* (1981), which seems to exist solely as a pretext for Spenser to build a cabin near a lake. The young man is Paul Giacomini, a teenage misfit, unloved by parents; he becomes Spenser's charge simply because he cares, because he is responsible, because he believes that people should be "getting their money's worth." Spenser takes the boy into the rural New England countryside "to make a man

out of him" while they build a cabin together. Parker allows Spenser to describe in detail the process of construction, the cutting of timber, the digging of holes, the excavation of a cellar. In the beginning the boy is a reluctant worker who wonders if machines could not do the job more quickly. Spenser admits it, but says, "But there's no satisfaction in it. Get a gasoline post-hole digger and rattle away at this like a guy making radiators. Gas fumes, noise. No sense that you're doing it."<sup>10</sup> While the boy is "doing it," of course, he learns confidence and grows into a strong human being. There can be little doubt that Thoreau's experience on the shores of Walden Pond lies behind Spenser's experiment with character building at the edge of Kimball Lake. Spenser's description of the locale is proof enough of parallels. "There were cabins," he says, "along the lake close enough to keep you from feeling like Henry Thoreau, but it was secluded."<sup>11</sup> Secluded, yes; Henry Thoreau, affirmative.

In a later time and in a more urban space than Walden Pond, one might fancy Henry Thoreau could himself have made a private eye in the American mold. Undeniably he was a private investigator of the universe. He credibly manifested in his real life the qualities that combine to create an uncanny resemblance to both the classic and the tough-guy detectives of fiction. For example, he demonstrated the unique powers of observation often associated with the business of detecting in classic stories. In his ability to deduce the identity of visitors to his cabin at Walden Pond during his absence he resembles Sherlock Holmes. "I could," he said, "always tell if visitors had called in my absence, either by the bended twigs or grass, or the print of their shoes, and generally of what sex or age or quality they were by some slight trace left, as a flower dropped, or a bunch of grass plucked and thrown away, even as far off as the railroad, half a mile distant, or by the lingering odor of a cigar or pipe."<sup>12</sup> In other ways, especially in terms of his sense of personal honor, Thoreau was like Chandler's Philip Marlowe. Like Marlowe he contained in himself an instinct for the lonelier sides of the street; however, as a measure of tolerance for Concord's version of the "mean streets" of the Big City he professed himself to be prepared to "sit out the sturdiest frequenter of the bar-room, if my business called me thither."<sup>13</sup> And who had a keener eye for clues than Thoreau? A mere trout in the milk spoke whole worlds to Thoreau.

Surely it is worth noting the case with which Thoreau fits into the role of the tough-guy detective as it is currently described by the scholars in the genre. When Edward Margolies defines the private dick, he could be describing the Thoreau of Walden: "a bachelor, individualistic, unswervingly honest, isolated and classless, who tends to regard most social and political institutions as soft or too amenable to corruption."<sup>14</sup> To be sure, these qualities may describe a variety of American heroes beginning at least with Natty Bumppo. However, beyond a doubt these are the qualities and characteristics that have elected Henry David Thoreau to be a major inspiration in forming the "code" of the detective-protagonist in the hard-boiled novels of Robert B. Parker.



## FOOT NOTES

1. See John G. Cawelti, "The Hard-Boiled Detective Story," in Adventure, Mystery, and Romance (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 139-161.
2. Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," Atlantic Monthly, 174 (December 1949), 59.
3. Mark Donovan, "Robert Parker Brings a Soft Touch to the Hard-Boiled School of Mystery Writing," People, 7 May 1984, p. 58.
4. David Geherin, Sons of Sam Spade (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), p. 6.
5. Geherin, p. 6.
6. Robert B. Parker, God Save the Child (New York: Dell, 1983), p. 87.
7. Promised Land, p. 116.
8. Robert B. Parker, Ceremony (New York: Dell, 1983), p. 179.
9. Promised Land, p. 203.
10. Robert B. Parker, Early Autumn (New York: Dell, 1981), p. 126.
11. Early Autumn, p. 103.
12. Henry David Thoreau, Walden (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), pp. 94-95.
13. Walden, p. 102.
14. Edward Margolies, Which Way Did He Go? (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), p. 2.

THOREAU'S SERMON TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
by Bradley P. Dean

In his letter to H.G.O. Blake dated September 26, 1855, Thoreau wrote:

As a preacher, I should be prompted to tell men, not so much how to get their wheat-bread cheaper, as of the bread of life compared with which THAT is bran.

Four years later Thoreau was given an opportunity to tell men how to get the bread of life when he was invited to fill in for Rev. Theodore Parker and deliver a lecture to the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society. On September 5, 1859, Thoreau agreed to deliver a lecture he called "Life Misspent" on Sunday morning, October 9, 1859 in the Boston Music Hall; and he spent the weeks prior to his engagement revising his earlier lecture, "What Shall It Profit?" until it became "Life Misspent."

The lecture was well advertised in the religious columns of the local newspapers, and four of the most prominent Boston papers ran reviews of the lecture the next day. These reviews are interesting because they give us an indication of how Thoreau was perceived and received by his contemporaries, and because they provide valuable summaries of the later of the two early "Life without Principle" lectures. Among other things, these reviews show that as a preacher Thoreau did indeed tell men about how to get the bread of life.

Walter Harding printed one of the four reviews in his article "Thoreau at the Boston Music Hall" (TSB 105 (Fall, 1968), p.7). The other three are reprinted here.

[From BOSTON ATLAS AND DAILY BEE, October 10, 1859:]

A HERMIT IN THE PULPIT--

AN ADDRESS ON MISSPENT LIVES.

Henry D. Thoreau, who is sometimes called "The Hermit of Concord," supplied the desk

at Music Hall yesterday. Mr. Thoreau is an eccentric individual, having lived until within a short time, in a hut, in the woods between Concord and Lincoln. He is at present a resident of the village of Concord, follows surveying as a business, and is an intimate friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson. His subject yesterday was "The Way in Which we Spend Our lives." It was an original, racy, and erratic production, and was listened to the close with interest. After a brief introductory, he proceeded to lament the spirit of money getting which begets the age. He said that a man who walks half a day in the woods out of pure love of them, was called a fool, but the speculator who shears them off and makes nature bald before time, was regarded as a good and sensible person.

In reference to lecturing, he said if one aimed to hit the popular mind, he must go down perpendicularly, an idea that excited laughter. The aim of labor, he said, should be, not to get a job, but to do it well. The great point is, he said, how not only to get a living, but how to get it pleasantly and well. The way in which most people get a living is by making shrift, which he regarded as a disgrace. He denounced gold-seeking in California and Australia. In considering all this rush to those countries for gold, he was induced to ask, is there not a greater mine in the inner life of each individual, into which each could strike a shaft?

The chief merit among us as a people, he held, was a higher aim in life. Again, he said that religion had long since been excluded from the church, and that institution had become a satire. We build our houses and barns on granite, but our characters and lives on clay. He regretted that society does not think for itself and obtain its knowledge from original sources. The man, he intimated, who carries from the Post Office the greatest number of letters, it was sure had not heard from himself for a long while.

Thoreau closed his lecture with quoting scripture, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loose [sic] his own soul."

We have merely made a note or two of the lecture, which was a singular, but in some respects, an able production.

[From BOSTON DAILY COURIER, October 10, 1859:]

MISSPENT LIVES.--Mr. Henry D. Thoreau delivered an address on "Misspent Lives," yesterday morning, before the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, at the Music Hall. Mr. Thoreau commenced by saying that when he was called upon to deliver an address, he always supposed the audience wanted to hear what he thought, and not merely things which might please the listeners; he should therefore give them a strong dose of himself. Everything at the present day, he said, was looked upon from a business point of view--by which one could secure the most money to one's self. If a man spend half a day walking through the woods, contemplating the beauties of nature, that man is called an idler; but if that man spend his whole day in speculation, he is called

industrious and enterprising.

To have done anything by which money is made merely, he thought was to be truly idle. Society had done nothing for us in regard to teaching us how to earn a living. It was well to ask ourselves whether Plato got his living any better than his contemporaries. All the new inventions seemed only improved muck rakes. A poor debtor goes to church on Sundays as he goes to the courts of chancery on week days, to make up his accounts, and find (sic) his outlays much greater than his incomes.

He spoke at some length of the money-making propensity of all classes at the present day, and thought the greatest idlers were those who went to California or Australia to dig gold. Mr. Thoreau has a way of treating the most trivial things in a grave, philosophical way, which reminds one of Touchstone. He appears to be philosophical to excess. A sort of Diogenes, to whom everything but nature appears to be just what it should not be. His manner of speaking resembles that of Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson.

[From BANNER OF LIGHT, undated clipping pasted into A. Bronson Alcott's Autobiographical Collections (vol. VIII):]

HENRY D. THOREAU AT MUSIC HALL.  
Sunday, October 9th

Mr. Henry D. Thoreau of Concord, the author of "Walden, or Life in the Woods," &c., lectured before Rev. Theodore Parker's congregation, at the Music Hall, on Sunday, October 9th, on "MISSPENT LIVES."

He began by remarking on the unfitness of a lecturer's dealing with a subject wholly foreign to himself. The greatest compliment the speaker ever had paid him, was, when he was asked WHAT HE THOUGHT. Men generally wanted to know of him--since he is a surveyor--how many acres of land they had, or some question to no better purpose. A man once came to ask him to lecture on Slavery; he found that the applicant and his clique expected seven-eighths of the lecture to be theirs, and one-eighth to be his; so he declined. He was resolved to give them a strong dose of himself; and, since the Committee had sent for him, and engaged to pay for him, he was bound that they should have him, though he should bore them intolerably.

He proposed to consider the way in which we spend our lives. The world is a place of business and bustle--no Sabbath--it is only work, work, work. It is not easy to buy a blank-book for thoughts; they generally ruled for dollars and cents. There is nothing so base as this. A foolish man in his town wished him to help make a wall, at the foot of a bank, the construction of which will occupy three weeks. The only good effected for the owner would be money. It would make money for the lecturer to help him; but, not considering that any real profit would accrue to either, he declines the job. If a man walks in the woods for the love of them, he is regarded a loafer; but if he spends his whole day in clearing off woods, and making the earth

bald before its time, he is esteemed a good citizen. Yet to do that from which you make money only, is to be idle, and worse. Do not hire a man who does the work for money, but him who does it for the love of it.

The man who changes his occupation for money, acknowledges that his life has been a failure. When men made such offers to him, he thought it as if, when, with oar and sail, his little bark had fought its way to the middle of the ocean, one should ask him to turn back. When a boy, he saw an advertisement for able-bodied seamen, and when he became of age he embarked for the journey, and meant to finish it. The community has no bribe to buy a wise man.

If the lecturer sold both his forenoons and afternoons to society, there would be, to him, nothing worth living for. There is no greater blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life in getting his living. Let a man live BY that FOR which he should live. The poet must sustain himself by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill fills its boilers by the shavings it makes. You must get your living by loving. To inherit property is not to be born, but to be still-born. On Sundays, the poor debtor in all that is of real value comes to church to take an account of stock, and finds his outgoes greater than his income. In the Catholic church, he gives up all, and thinks to start again. There is little or nothing written upon the subject of getting a living--not only how to make it honest and honorable, but altogether inviting, and glorious, as it should be. Yet is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his living more successfully than his admirers, or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men.

The rush to California Mr. Thoreau regarded as reflecting the greatest disgrace on mankind, that so many are willing to live by luck, so to engage the labors of others less lucky than themselves, and contribute nothing to society. And this, said he, is called enterprise! A hog, that roots his own living, so stirring up the soil, would be ashamed of himself to live such a life. If the lecturer could command the wealth of all the worlds by lifting a finger, he would not pay such a price for that somewhat extensive property. He would not buy a ticket in a lottery, whose prizes were seats in heaven. Such lives make God a moneyed gentleman, who scatters a handful of pennies, to amuse himself with seeing the world scramble for them. Satan, from one of his elevations, showed mankind the kingdom of California, and they shouted "Go ahead!" and he had to exert himself to get there first--but he did.

Among our teachers there are few moral teachers. The prophets are the apologists of the age. The lecturer's noblest friends (he did not state whether they were his best ones) advised him not to trouble himself on these subjects.

The men who go to California and Australia are most unfortunate when most successful. In the true mines, of his own nature, a man will



never be interfered with by others, or limited in his claim. The man who found the twenty-eight pound nugget, in Australia, bought a horse and spent his days in galloping about the country, and calling to every passer-- "Do you know who I am? I am the bloody wretch who found the nugget!" Howitt says he was hopelessly ruined, but that he was but the representative of his class.

But why go to California for a text? California is the child of New England, bred at school and church. America is said to be the arena where the battle of freedom is to be fought; but, even if we grant that the American is politically free, he is a slave to a moral tyrant. Now that the RES PUBLICA has been settled, it is time to see after the RES PRIVATA. We are concerned about the outmost defenses of freedom, merely. There is a part of us which is not represented--it is taxation without representation; we quarter our gross bodies upon our souls, till the form (sic) eat up the whole substance.

Mr. Thoreau proceeded to express his unmeasured contempt of politics and government. He never reads the political columns of the newspaper; and the time and labor bestowed by our Presidents on their messages seems to have been in great part wasted, as Mr. Thoreau has never read one of them. Returning to his former theme, he claimed that it was not their freedom from the wants that create industry, which keeps the South Sea Islanders savage, but simply their want of the higher sentiments which should take the place of these. Civilization does not substitute this for the barren simplicity of the savage. The Concord muster was spoken of as having its only result in the dust which covered even the lily-pads in the river. The speaker then dwelt, at considerable length, on the idleness of the mere NEWS, involving no principle. He himself would not go to the corner to see the world blow up, though an excellent view of the event might be had from that position. He judged that a wise man, on being waked to be told that the sun was snuffed out, would not manifest the slightest interest in that phenomenon, at least until he was in actual need of light. We may fill our minds with news from the Court of Heaven, or of the Police Court. He preferred the former. We should preserve our chastity of mind, as well as soul.

The lecture, notwithstanding its very peculiar views, elicited much interest from the epigrammatic style in which it was clothed.

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- Steinhart, Peter. "Simplicity." AUDUBON, 86 (Nov. 1984), 6-9. On following Thoreau's principles today.
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----- The Same. Reviews: BOSTON GLOBE, Nov. 11, 1984; PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, Oct. 5, 1984.

----- WALDEN. Portsmouth, R.I.: Jimcin Recordings (P.O.Box 536, Zip 02871), 1979. The first full recording of WALDEN on cassettes (8 of them gathered into a sturdy book-shaped case). The reader is not identified, but his voice is clear and pleasant to listen to. His text is fairly accurate, though he occasionally omits a minor word or makes an inadvertent substitution such as "necessities" for "necessaries." We found it easier to listen to than any of the other recordings we have heard. \$48.00.

----- The Same. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier Enterprise, n.d.

----- The Same. Trans. into Chinese by Fan-yun Kung. Taipei: Chih Wen, 1983.

Includes a preface, "The Ideas and Art of WALDEN" by the translator and an article "Thoreau's Life and WALDEN." We are told by Kuochien Liang that it is a more accurate translation than earlier ones but that it still contains many errors--such as translating "Brute Neighbors" as "Cruel Neighbors."

Thorpe, Peter. "What's True of Me Is True of Everybody" in WHY LITERATURE IS BAD FOR YOU. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1980. pp. 54-58. Argues that it was Thoreau, not his reading audience, who led a life of quiet desperation.

Walker, Marianne. "True Guru" LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL. Oct. 7, 1984. On HDT as a foe of stress.

White, Kenneth. "Henry Thoreau, homme du dehors" In Henry D. Thoreau. JOURNAL. Paris: Les Presses d'aujourd'hui, 1981. pp. 7-26.

----- "Marcher avec Thoreau" in LA FIGURE DU DEHORS. Paris: Grasset, 1982. pp. 82-88.

WORCESTER TELEGRAM. "Early Worcester Literary Days." Reprinted from issue of Oct. 26, 1896. CS, 17 (Aug. 1984), 3-6.

YANKEE. "Has Anyone Seen This Photograph?" 48 (Dec. 1984), 15-16. In search of the missing Dunshee ambrotype.

We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: J. Armstrong, F. Arnstein, R. Angelo, M. Brooks, R. Borst, R. Dunbar, M. Dettlerline, F. Dedmond, G. Farcé, L. Ferguson, L. Files, R. Galvin, V. Halbert, J. Huber, E. Heganbotham, E. Johnson, D. Jeffrey, D. Kamen-Kaye, K. Liang, D. McClure, A. McGrath, S. Reznick,

G. Ryan, E. Shaw, E. Schofield, R. Scheratsky, R. Thompson, J. Vickers, M. Walker, P. Williams, F. Ziegler, and J. Zuithoff. Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new items as they appear.

## THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Thoreau Society will be held on Saturday July 13th in Concord, Mass. Among the features of the meeting will be a talk by Joyce Carol Oates, the novelist, and by Robert Gross.

The nominating committee (Linda Beaulieu, chairman; Ray Angelo, Parker Huber, and Edmund Schofield) has submitted the following slate of officers to be voted on at the annual meeting: Frederick Wagner, Clinton, N.Y., president; Michael Meyer, Storrs, Conn., president-elect; John Clymer, Concord, Mass., executive committee chairman; Marian Wheeler, Concord, Mass., chairman of program committee; Mary Anderson, Concord, Mass., treasurer; and Walter Harding, Geneseo, N.Y., secretary. Further nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting.

A Jennifer Lynn Rubin Fund, in memory of the Hamilton College student, Class of 1983, who died in Togo in June 1984 while serving in the Peace Corps, has been established by Frederick Wagner with a contribution of one thousand dollars. Its income is to be used to purchase books for the research library of the Thoreau Lyceum.

## NECROLOGY

Lloyd S. Jenkins, 72, of Paxton, Mass., who conducted a bird column in the Worcester TELEGRAM for 27 years. He attended the annual meetings regularly.

Pauline Kohlrausch, 90, of Carlisle, Ms., one of the earliest members of the Thoreau Society; she joined in 1942.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

Professor Kuochien Liang of the National Taiwan Normal University, who is working on a new translation of WALDEN into Chinese, asks about the meaning of the sentence early in the first chapter which reads, "From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrates." Why did Thoreau pick minks and muskrates? Are they notably brave? Or are they timid and Thoreau is being sarcastic? He would appreciate any help in interpreting the line. (Send your comments to your secretary who will forward them.)

When Alice Drefchinski of Franklin, La., took a \$5,082 "war tax deduction" in her income tax and was fined \$500 by the IPS, Judge John Shaw of the Federal District Court in Opelousas, La., upheld the fine, saying, "Many respected Americans have engaged in civil disobedience as a form of protest against taxation for military spending. Henry David Thoreau, for example, refused to pay taxes that would contribute to the funding of the Mexican-American War. Yet this mode of protest is not without its cost. Thoreau spent a night in the Concord jail. Alice Drefchinski must pay a \$500 civil penalty." [NEW YORK TIMES, July 8, 1984.]

When nine people were found guilty of blocking gates to the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, they were fined ten dollars each. Judge John Dowling said that was the amount of the poll tax that Thoreau refused to pay when he was among the first to use non-violent civil disobedience. [USA TODAY, Aug. 10, 1984]

When Stephen Kenney, who is working on a doctoral dissertation on Thoreau, nature and society at SUNY Buffalo, decided to let weeds grow on his front lawn in Kenmore, N.Y. as "ecologically superior" to grass, he was fined fifty dollars a day by a local justice. The case is now on appeal.

A new movie, "The Prodigal," opens with the protagonist living in a lean-to on an island reading Thoreau. [CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Oct. 7, 1983, pp. 14-20.]

The Lyceum Restaurant in Salem, Mass., boasts in its current menu that Thoreau once lectured in its building.

David Barto, a high-school teacher from Levittown, Pa., presents an impersonation of Thoreau for many high schools in his area. He also performed twice this summer at the Walden Pond Reservation.

When the National Endowment for the Humanities took a poll this summer on books all high school students should read, WALDEN, not surprisingly, was high on the list. [NEW YORK TIMES, Aug. 13, 1984]

According to Garson Kanin [TRACY AND HEPBURN, New York: Viking, 1971, p. 215] Spencer Tracy "was a strangely eclectic reader; the only man I know, for example, who had read through the fourteen volumes of Thoreau's JOURNAL."

The Globe Corner Bookstore in Boston is selling a beautiful note card reproducing Rudolfs Ruzicka's "A View of Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts, 1927" in color.

In his Abolition novel PINE AND PALM [New York: Holt, 1887, p.53], Thoreau's friend Moncure Conway tells of a lynch mob about to murder a black, and adds,

"Just then from a remote corner stepped forward a quaint little man, with large luminous eyes, whom few even of the anti-slavery men recognized as Thoreau, and placed himself in front of the rush, so quietly--as if he did not see it--that the crowd was surprised into momentary stillness. 'Doubtless,' he said, 'you all remember that fine passage in the Bhagavatgita where Krishna says to Arjuna, Thou and I have met many times.' The mob was breathless. 'I may now say that you and I have met in various ages of the world.' Here somebody exploded in a laugh, which made the crowd laugh. The mob that laughs is lost. The ring-leaders vainly tried to rally their forces. Thoreau was heard to the end of his estimate of how many births the mob and the abolitionists had gone through."

Gilbert Harrison's THE ENTHUSIAST: A LIFE OF THORNTON WILDER (New Haven: Ticknor & Fields, 1983) cites numerous examples of Wilder's interest in HDT.

The intersections of Route 2 and Walden Street at Walden Pond are scheduled for complete reconstruction in the summer of 1985.

According to an ad in the Oct. 15, 1984 NEW YORKER a sweater sold by J.G. Hook is designed for "Walden Pond-ing."

The Great Northern Paper Co. is planning a \$100-million hydroelectric dam at Big Ambejackmockamus Falls on the Penobscot River near Mt. Katahdin that will flood much of the area Thoreau traveled. (NEW YORK TIMES, Oct. 14, 1984).

"Romance Language," a musical fantasy by Peter Parnell, currently playing in New York City, includes as one of its many historical figures, Thoreau who later becomes General Custer.

Walden Pond State Reservation has announced the beginning of a million dollar restoration which will include tearing down the old concrete bathhouses and the concrete pier and the cement wall along the southeastern corner of the pond.

The December 1984 issue of MONEY has a special report on "How to Simplify" that is filled with quotations from Thoreau.

The latest catalog of M & S Rare Books (Box 311, Weston, Mass. 02193) includes a photograph of Thoreau's plan of Nathaniel Hawthorne's estate. Price: \$25,000.

Paul Williams writes us: "It seems there was a well known actor and comedian named Don. He had a son, who also wanted to go into show business, so he and his father used to put on an act together. Then the son had an unhappy marriage which took most of the joy out of him and hurt their act somewhat. At one point someone was thinking of booking only one of them, and he mused to his agent, 'I wonder, for what we want, maybe Don is too old.' 'No,' was the reply. 'There is more play to Don. The son is but a mourning star.'"

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